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ABSTRACT

This paper summarizes the results of a study of the impact of immigration on California, particularly in Los Angeles County. Of the 1.7 million foreign-born persons in Los Angeles County in 1980, 950,000 (or 57 percent) came to the United States after 1970. Mexican immigrants comprise almost one-half of the total of recent arrivals. They tend to be below the native population in educational attainment and occupational status. In 1980 two-thirds of the adult Mexican immigrant population in Los Angeles had less than a ninth-grade education, and five out of six experienced workers held blue-collar jobs--mostly as operatives and laborers. One-half of recent Mexican immigrant workers in Los Angeles were employed in manufacturing, and Mexican immigrants accounted for between one-third and one-half of all employment in industries such as textiles, apparel, lumber and wood, and furniture and fixtures. The influx of Mexicans to southern California during the 1970s does not appear to have increased the aggregate level of unemployment among blacks. Some of the slower-than-average wage growth in low-wage manufacturing in Los Angeles during that time is attributable to the high proportions of Mexican immigrants in these industries, but the impact of Mexican immigrants on the wages paid to non-Hispanics in semi-skilled and skilled occupations appears to be negligible. A list of references and related titles is included. (Author/PS)

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IMPACTS OF IMMIGRATION IN CALIFORNIA

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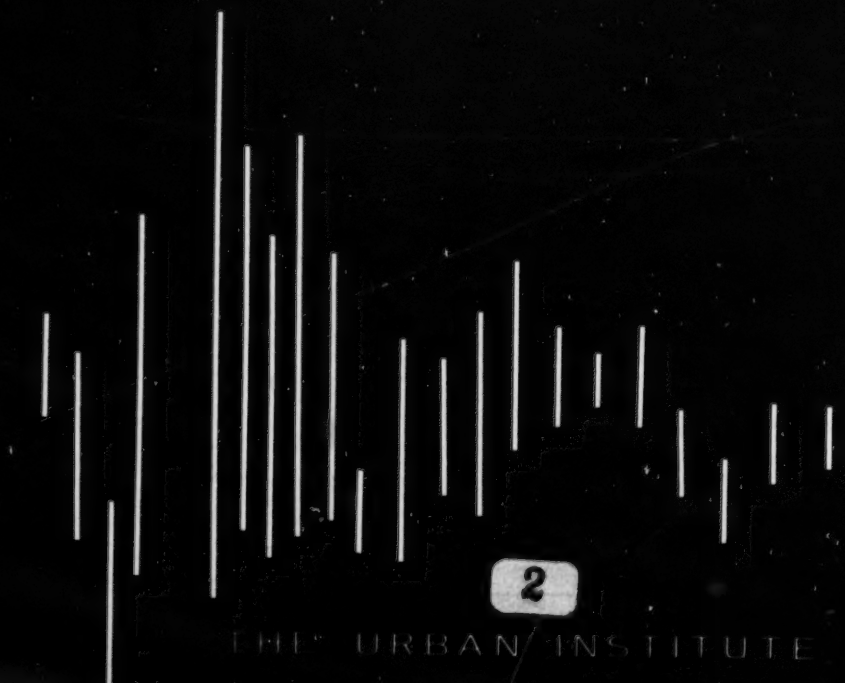
POLICY DISCUSSION PAPER

Recent Immigrants to Los Angeles:
Characteristics and
Labor Market Impacts

by

Thomas J. Espenshade
Tracy Ann Goodis



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Recent Immigrants to Los Angeles: Characteristics and Labor Market Impacts

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FOREWORD

Issues concerning the level and composition of immigration to the United States have assumed prominent positions on the agendas of many policymakers. Perhaps nowhere are immigration's effects more keenly felt than in California, where one-quarter of all foreign-born persons in the United States currently reside.

This Policy Discussion Paper series is aimed at improving the quality of the policy-making process through a broad distribution of research findings on the consequences of immigration to California. These dissemination activities are part of The Urban Institute's larger project, Study of the Impacts of Immigration in California, funded by the Weingart Foundation, the Atlantic Richfield Foundation, the Ahmanson Foundation, and the Times Mirror Foundation. Important policy issues being addressed include (a) economic and fiscal issues associated with immigration, (b) the character and tempo of assimilation processes, and (c) the impact on California of proposals for immigration reform. All major immigrant groups to California--not just Mexicans--are being included, as are the comparative effects in northern as well as in southern California.

The Urban Institute's objective is to make a positive contribution to the policy process. It is committed to getting its work into the hands of people who can use it and rely upon it to make judgments of their own on future policy directions. Related titles are listed at the end of this paper.

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RECENT IMMIGRANTS TO LOS ANGELES:
CHARACTERISTICS AND LABOR MARKET IMPACTS

Executive Summary

One-quarter of all foreign-born persons in the United States now reside in California, and nearly half of these live in Los Angeles County. Of the 1.7 million foreign-born persons in Los Angeles County in 1980, 950,000 (or 57 percent) came to the United States after 1970. Mexican immigrants comprise the largest group of recent arrivals and account for almost one-half of the total. Mexican immigrant workers tend to be below the native population in educational attainment and occupational status. In 1980 two-thirds of the adult Mexican immigrant population in Los Angeles had less than a ninth-grade education, and five out of six experienced workers held blue-collar jobs—mostly as operatives and laborers. One-half of recent Mexican immigrant workers in Los Angeles were employed in manufacturing, and Mexican immigrants accounted for between one-third and one-half of all employment in industries such as textiles, apparel, lumber and wood, and furniture and fixtures. The influx of Mexicans to Los Angeles and to southern California in general during the 1970s does not appear to have increased the aggregate level of unemployment among blacks. Some of the slower-than-average wage growth in low-wage manufacturing in Los Angeles during that time is attributable to the high proportions of Mexican immigrants in these industries, but the impact of Mexican immigrants on the wages paid to non-Hispanics in semi-skilled and skilled occupations appears to be negligible.

INTRODUCTION

As it has several times in its history, the United States today is experiencing a massive wave of immigration. The ethnic composition of this recent immigrant population, however, has shifted dramatically. Although Europeans still comprise the largest group among the foreign-born population in the United States (30 percent), 28 percent are now Latin Americans and 16 percent are of Asian origin (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1984). Significantly, Mexicans now make up 56 percent of all Latin American immigrants.

Recent immigration patterns illustrate this rapid increase in the immigration rates of both Asians and Mexicans. For example, of the 5.4 million foreign-born persons who immigrated to the United States prior to 1960 and who were living in the United States in 1980, 57 percent were of European origin. However, Europeans comprised just 9 percent of the 3.3 million foreign-born persons living in the United States in 1980 and who arrived between 1975 and 1980. Asians and Hispanics dominate the recent immigrant population. Between 1975 and 1980, 1.2 million Asians and 1.3 million Latin Americans (726,000 of whom were from Mexico) arrived in the United States. In fact, roughly one-half of all Asians and over 30 percent of all Mexicans residing in this country in 1980 arrived during this time period. The high concentration of immigrants in California--6 percent of the total U.S. population is foreign-born compared with over 15 percent of the California population--affects California as well as the rest of the country (see table 1).

One-quarter of all foreign-born persons in the United States now reside in California. As shown in table 2, 60 percent of the European immigrants in

Table 1

Composition of Population in California
and Los Angeles County, 1980

	California	Los Angeles County
Total Population	23,667,902	7,477,503
Place of Birth		
Native Born	20,087,869 (84.9%)	5,812,710 (77.7%)
Foreign Born	3,580,033 (15.1%)	1,664,793 (22.3%)
Citizenship of Foreign Born		
Naturalized	1,300,557 (36.3%)	492,283 (29.6%)
Not a Citizen	2,279,476 (63.7%)	1,172,510 (70.4%)

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census of Population, vol. 1, Characteristics of the Population, Chapter D: "Detailed Population Characteristics," Part 6, California, PC80-1-D6, November 1983.

Table 2

Foreign-Born Persons in California, 1980;
Country of Birth by Year of Immigration

Place of Birth	Total	1975-1980	1970-1974	1965-1969	1960-1964	1950-1959	Before 1950
Europe	633,550	62,142	42,047	67,951	80,662	152,134	228,614
	(100.0%)	(9.8%)	(6.6%)	(10.7%)	(12.7%)	(24.0%)	(36.1%)
USSR	58,642	17,246	2,295	1,457	2,253	6,559	28,832
	(100.0%)	(29.4%)	(3.9%)	(2.5%)	(3.8%)	(11.2%)	(49.2%)
Asia	876,878	413,805	181,367	105,669	56,927	62,189	56,921
	(100.0%)	(47.2%)	(20.7%)	(12.1%)	(6.5%)	(7.1%)	(16.5%)
Canada	163,300	14,005	6,751	15,603	27,055	41,018	58,868
	(100.0%)	(8.6%)	(4.1%)	(9.6%)	(16.6%)	(25.1%)	(36.0%)
Mexico	1,277,969	437,268	336,364	174,162	121,702	110,311	98,162
	(100.0%)	(34.2%)	(26.3%)	(13.6%)	(9.5%)	(8.6%)	(7.7%)
Central America	225,981	75,454	52,184	41,460	28,542	17,045	11,296
	(100.0%)	(33.4%)	(23.1%)	(18.3%)	(12.6%)	(7.5%)	(5.0%)
South America	96,769	25,701	17,896	20,775	19,006	9,126	4,265
	(100.0%)	(26.6%)	(18.5%)	(21.5%)	(19.6%)	(9.4%)	(4.4%)
Africa	34,551	14,118	7,309	4,882	2,771	2,830	2,641
	(100.0%)	(40.9%)	(21.2%)	(14.1%)	(8.0%)	(8.2%)	(7.6%)
Other/Not Reported	212,393	64,054	34,829	25,502	19,359	27,472	41,177
	(100.0%)	(30.2%)	(16.4%)	(12.0%)	(9.1%)	(12.9%)	(19.4%)
Total	3,580,033	1,123,793	681,042	457,461	358,277	428,684	530,776
	(100.0%)	(31.4%)	(19.0%)	(12.8%)	(10.0%)	(12.0%)	(14.8%)

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census of Population, vol. 1, Characteristics of the Population, Chapter D: "Detailed Population Characteristics," Part 6, California, PC80-1-D6, November 1983.

California in 1980 came to the United States prior to 1960. Today they comprise less than 20 percent of the foreign-born population in California. In contrast, the number of Asian immigrants has been rising steadily. Asians now total 25 percent of the immigrant population in California. Two-thirds of all Asians in California in 1980 arrived in the United States during the 1970s.

California has also absorbed an increasing number of Mexican immigrants. Thirty-five percent of the foreign-born population is Mexican, of whom 60 percent immigrated to the state during the past decade. Many of these Mexicans have crossed the California border illegally. A recent study by Passel and Woodrow (1984) estimates that one-half of the 2.1 million undocumented persons enumerated in the United States in 1980 were in California. Roughly 75 percent of the illegal immigrants in the state are of Mexican heritage.

The ability of California and especially of Los Angeles County—where almost one-half of the foreign-born population in California resides—to deal successfully with the accelerated immigration of Asians and Mexicans will hold important implications for the long-term effects of these phenomena throughout the country.

RECENT IMMIGRANTS TO LOS ANGELES COUNTY: DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

Over 22 percent of the total population in Los Angeles County is foreign-born (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1983). Almost four out of ten Asian immigrants in California reside in Los Angeles, and currently they total 20 percent of the Los Angeles County foreign-born population (see table 3). Approximately 21 percent of the Asian immigrants are from the Philippines, 15

Table 3

Foreign-Born Persons in Los Angeles County, 1980;
Country of Birth by Year of Immigration

Place of Birth	Total	1975-1980	1970-1974	1965-1969	1960-1964	1950-1959	Before 1950
Europe	216,520	21,781	14,069	21,983	27,433	53,084	78,170
	(100.0%)	(10.1%)	(6.5%)	(10.2%)	(12.7%)	(24.5%)	(36.1%)
USSR	34,459	12,677	1,579	788	952	2,405	16,058
	(100.0%)	(36.8%)	(4.6%)	(2.3%)	(2.8%)	(7.0%)	(46.6%)
Asia	339,589	175,318	76,733	36,471	17,200	17,498	16,369
	(100.0%)	(51.6%)	(22.6%)	(10.7%)	(5.1%)	(5.2%)	(4.8%)
Canada	56,493	5,044	2,336	5,136	9,022	14,703	20,252
	(100.0%)	(8.9%)	(4.1%)	(9.1%)	(16.0%)	(26.0%)	(35.8%)
Mexico	697,771	254,861	201,411	95,557	55,723	49,021	41,198
	(100.0%)	(36.5%)	(28.9%)	(13.7%)	(8.0%)	(7.0%)	(5.9%)
Central America	158,104	58,613	41,011	29,681	16,616	8,170	4,013
	(100.0%)	(37.1%)	(25.9%)	(18.8%)	(10.5%)	(5.2%)	(2.5%)
South America	57,716	15,161	11,754	13,316	11,623	4,285	1,577
	(100.0%)	(26.3%)	(20.4%)	(23.1%)	(20.1%)	(7.4%)	(2.7%)
Africa	17,692	7,420	4,296	2,624	1,212	1,126	1,014
	(100.0%)	(41.9%)	(24.3%)	(14.8%)	(6.9%)	(6.4%)	(5.7%)
Other/Not Reported	86,449	28,382	16,431	10,379	7,010	9,520	14,727
	(100.0%)	(32.8%)	(19.0%)	(12.0%)	(8.1%)	(11.0%)	(17.0%)
Total	1,664,793	579,257	369,620	215,935	146,791	159,812	193,378
	(100.0%)	(34.8%)	(22.2%)	(13.0%)	(8.8%)	(9.6%)	(11.6%)

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census of Population, vol. 1, Characteristics of the Population, Chapter D: "Detailed Population Characteristics," Part 6, California, PC80-1-D6, November 1983.

percent from Korea, 10 percent from China, and 10 percent from Japan. Other major groups include the Vietnamese (8 percent) and Iranians (8 percent); overwhelming majorities of both of these groups arrived in Los Angeles between 1975 and 1980. In fact, almost 75 percent of Asians in Los Angeles immigrated during the 1970s. In addition, according to a report by the Population Research Unit of the California Department of Finance (1984) in Sacramento, the number of Southeast Asian refugees in Los Angeles also is increasing. Of the 280,000 Southeast Asian refugees in California in July 1983, 73,600 lived in Los Angeles County. Roughly 60 percent of these refugees arrived in the county between 1979 and 1983. An additional 14 percent is attributable to net secondary migration during the past three years.

As mentioned earlier, an increasing number of Mexicans have been arriving in California. Over one-half of these immigrants in California live in Los Angeles County (see table 4) and comprise over 40 percent of the county's foreign-born population. Two-thirds of the Mexican immigrants in Los Angeles arrived during the 1970s. This influx of almost one-half million Mexicans in just ten years already has altered the socioeconomic character of Los Angeles.

The majority of Mexican immigrants who arrived in California during the 1970s are male and slightly younger than other recent immigrants. The median age for Mexican males is 23.3 years compared to 25.8 years for other male immigrants. Europeans are the oldest recent immigrants, with a median age of 30.6 for males and 31.0 for females.

Native and immigrant populations participate in the Los Angeles labor force at approximately the same rate, although a larger proportion of Hispanic immigrants (67.6 percent) than of non-Hispanic immigrants (57.5 percent) are members of the civilian labor force (see table 5). In 1980, Mexican

Table 4

Residence of the Foreign-Born Population
By Country of Birth, 1980

Place of Birth	Residence in 1980		Percentage Living in Los Angeles County
	California	Los Angeles County	
Europe	633,550	216,520	34.2%
USSR	58,642	34,459	58.8%
Asia	876,878	339,589	38.7%
Canada	163,300	56,493	34.6%
Mexico	1,227,969	697,771	54.6%
Central America	225,981	158,104	70.0%
South America	96,769	57,716	59.6%
Africa	34,551	17,692	51.2%
Other	212,393	86,449	40.7%
Total	3,580,033	1,664,793	46.5%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census of Population, vol. 1, Characteristics of the Population, Chapter D: "Detailed Population Characteristics," Part 6, California, PC80-1-D6, November 1983.

Table 5

Labor Force Status of Los Angeles County, 1980

	Total Los Angeles County	Native Population	Immigrant Population	Hispanic Immigrants		Non-Hispanic Immigrants
				Mexican	Non-Mexican	
Total Population 16 Years and Over	5,710,527	4,320,807	1,389,720	536,640	205,880	647,200
Civilian Labor Force	3,694,683 (64.7%)	2,820,763 (65.3%)	873,920 (62.9%)	358,620 (66.8%)	143,460 (69.7%)	371,840 (57.5%)
Employed	3,471,764 (94.0%)	2,655,404 (94.1%)	816,360 (93.4%)	328,880 (91.7%)	132,780 (92.6%)	354,700 (95.4%)
Unemployed	222,919 (6.0%)	165,359 (5.9%)	57,560 (6.6%)	29,740 (8.3%)	10,680 (7.4%)	17,140 (4.6%)
Armed Services	10,833 (0.2%)	9,633 (0.2%)	1,200 (0.09%)	120 (0.02%)	140 (0.06%)	940 (0.15%)
Not in Labor Force	2,005,011 (35.1%)	1,490,411 (34.5%)	514,600 (37.0%)	177,900 (33.2%)	62,280 (30.3%)	274,420 (42.4%)

Source: Tabulations by the Urban Institute from the Public Use Microdata Samples of the 1980 Census of Population; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census of Population, vol. 1, Characteristics of the Population, Chapter D: "Detailed Population Characteristics," Part 6, California, PC80-1-D6, November 1983.

immigrants had the highest unemployment rate (8.3 percent) among the various population segments; the rate was 5.9 percent for the native population and just 4.6 percent for non-Hispanic immigrants.

Tabulations from the 1980 Census of Population reveal a wide gap in the educational background of Los Angeles County native residents and Hispanic immigrants (table 6). Sixty-seven percent of Mexican immigrants and over 36 percent of other Hispanic immigrants have completed no more than eight years of schooling, compared with only 17 percent of the Los Angeles population in general. By contrast, nearly 40 percent of the Los Angeles population has some college education in comparison with less than 10 percent of Mexican immigrants. A similar pattern emerges for those immigrating to the state during the 1970s; almost 75 percent of Mexican immigrants had the equivalent of no more than an eighth grade education. In comparison, over 50 percent of recent Asian arrivals attended college.

Partly because of low levels of education, most Mexican immigrants are employed in low-skill, blue-collar occupations. For example, as shown in table 7, two out of every three experienced workers in the native population reported job experience in white-collar occupations, typically professional and managerial or clerical and sales positions. By contrast, only 16 percent of Mexican immigrant workers had experience in white-collar occupations, and 84 percent reported blue-collar experience largely as laborers or machine operators.

The majority of non-Mexican Hispanic immigrants also had more experience in blue-collar occupations than the native population, although one-third held positions in white-collar jobs, mostly in sales or clerical positions. The types of jobs held by non-Hispanic immigrants were almost identical to the

Table 6

Educational Attainment of Los Angeles County Residents, 1980

	Total Los Angeles County[a]	Hispanic Immigrants	
		Mexican	Non-Mexican
Total Persons 26 Years and Over	4,430,503	357,220	150,220
Years of Education			
Grade School			
0 to 8 years	752,145 (17.0%)	238,020 (66.6%)	55,140 (36.7%)
High School			
1 to 3 years	583,910 (13.2%)	40,680 (11.4%)	17,420 (11.6%)
4 years	1,336,165 (30.2%)	47,620 (13.3%)	35,540 (23.7%)
College			
1 to 3 years	939,625 (21.2%)	22,400 (6.2%)	23,320 (15.5%)
4 years	393,034 (8.9%)	3,360 (0.9%)	8,000 (5.3%)
5 or more years	425,624 (9.6%)	5,140 (1.4%)	10,800 (7.2%)

Source: Tabulations by the Urban Institute from the Public Use Microdata Samples of the 1980 Census of Population; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census of Population, vol. 1, Characteristics of the Population, Chapter C: "General Social and Economic Characteristics," Part 6, California, PC80-1-C6, July 1983.

a. Includes persons 25 years and over.

Table 7

Occupation of Experienced Workers in Los Angeles County, 1980

	Total Los Angeles County[a]	Native Population[a]	Immigrant Population	Hispanic Immigrants		Non-Hispanic Immigrants
				Mexican	Non-Mexican	
Experienced Workers[b]	3,483,135	2,482,075	1,001,060	398,920	160,140	442,000
White Collar	1,992,909 (57.2%)	1,599,609 (64.4%)	393,300 (39.3%)	63,940 (16.0%)	53,980 (33.7%)	275,380 (62.3%)
Professional/ managerial	858,061 (43.1%)	698,541 (43.7%)	159,520 (40.6%)	16,740 (26.2%)	17,160 (31.8%)	125,620 (45.6%)
Technical	107,233 (5.4%)	83,133 (5.2%)	24,100 (6.1%)	2,680 (4.2%)	2,760 (5.1%)	18,660 (6.8%)
Sales and Clerical	1,027,615 (51.6%)	817,935 (51.1%)	209,680 (53.3%)	44,520 (69.6%)	34,060 (63.1%)	131,100 (47.6%)
Blue Collar	1,489,448 (42.8%)	881,688 (35.5%)	607,760 (60.7%)	334,980 (84.0%)	106,160 (66.3%)	166,620 (37.7%)
Service	401,332 (26.9%)	248,612 (28.2%)	152,720 (25.1%)	66,100 (19.7%)	33,020 (31.1%)	53,600 (32.2%)
Argiculture/ Forestry/Fishing	37,541 (2.5%)	18,321 (2.1%)	19,220 (3.2%)	12,700 (3.8%)	1,960 (1.8%)	4,560 (2.7%)
Craft and Kindred	431,828 (29.0%)	292,708 (33.2%)	139,120 (22.9%)	64,300 (19.2%)	22,960 (21.6%)	51,860 (31.1%)
Operatives and Laborers	618,747 (41.5%)	322,047 (36.5%)	296,700 (48.8%)	191,880 (57.3%)	48,220 (45.4%)	56,600 (34.0%)

Source: Tabulations by the Urban Institute from the Public Use Microdata Samples of the 1980 Census of Population; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census of Population, vol. 1, Characteristics of the Population, Chapter D: "Detailed Population Characteristics," Part 6, California, PC80-1-D6, November 1983.

a. Occupations of 778 experienced workers were not classified.

b. Employed persons and those unemployed persons who have worked at any time in the past. Occupation and industry data were not collected for persons who have never worked or who have not worked since 1974.

native population. Roughly two-thirds of non-Hispanic immigrants were involved in white-collar work with the remainder evenly divided among service jobs, construction and repair work, or machine operators and laborers. The data suggest that Mexican immigrants are not competing for the types of jobs held by the non-Hispanic immigrant and native population. In fact, they actually may be filling a void in low-skill, blue-collar occupations.

Recent statistics indicate that the influx of Mexicans into California has continued since 1980. According to data from the Current Population Survey, shown in table 8, between 1980 and 1983 almost 30 percent of all immigrants to California were of Spanish (or Hispanic) origin, and three-fourths of these were Mexican. Significantly, roughly 5 percent of those who came to California from another state were also of Spanish origin. Its geographic position and already large Mexican population will continue to make California an attractive destination for future Mexican immigrants.

To summarize, our review of trends in recent immigration to California and to Los Angeles has revealed the following:

- One-quarter of the foreign-born population in the United States lives in California, and nearly one-half of those in California live in Los Angeles County.
- The majority of Asian and Mexican immigrants in Los Angeles in 1980 arrived during the 1970s.
- Fifty percent of the 2.1 million illegal aliens in the United States enumerated in the 1980 census reside in California.
- Two-thirds of Mexican immigrants in Los Angeles have eight years or less of education.
- Although there is little difference in the labor force participation rates between the native and foreign-born populations in Los Angeles, Mexican immigrants have the highest rate of unemployment.
- Five out of six Mexican immigrants in Los Angeles are employed in blue-collar occupations, typically low-skill jobs.

Table 8

Migration to California, 1980-1983[a]
(in thousands)

By Race and Spanish Origin	California Population 1983	Total In-migration, 1980-1983	
		Migrants From Another State in the U.S.	Immigrants From Abroad
Total	24,227 (100.0%)	1,721 (100.0%)	810 (100.0%)
White	20,197 (83.4%)	1,422 (82.6%)	438 (54.1%)
Black	2,086 (8.6%)	143 (8.3%)	15 (1.9%)
Other	1,944 (8.0%)	156 (9.1%)	358 (44.2%)
Spanish Origin[b]	4,638 (19.1%)	95 (5.5%)	242 (29.9%)
Mexican	3,859	68	186
Other Spanish	779	26	59

Source: Special tabulations from the March Current Population Survey, 1980-1983, furnished by the U.S. Bureau of the Census.

a. Based on the civilian noninstitutional population, plus members of the Armed Forces living off post or with members of their family on post.

b. 98.6 percent of those identified as of Spanish origin are included in the totals for the white race, 0.7 percent are included in the totals for blacks, and 0.6 percent are in the other category.

- Almost one-third of immigrants to California between 1980 and 1983 were of Spanish origin.

LABOR MARKET IMPACTS OF MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS[1]

The most significant economic effect of immigration is that it leads to an expansion of the labor force. By 1980 immigrants who arrived in the United States during the 1970s held about 2.7 million jobs—one-eighth of the 21 million jobs added to the economy during that decade. California alone provided one out of every three jobs held by these new immigrants.

Because Mexican immigrants comprised over one-third of the foreign-born population in California and closer to one-half of all foreign-born persons in Los Angeles County in 1980, the following discussion focuses on the labor market impacts of Mexican immigrants. We consider first the immigrant share of employment growth in the 1970s and then examine the impact of Mexican immigrants on the job market and wages of native-born workers.

The Immigrant Share of Employment Growth

During the 1970s, as in previous decades, the rate of employment growth in southern California exceeded the national average by a substantial margin. Employment increased by nearly 1.8 million persons--almost 8 percent of national labor force growth—even though the population of southern California was just 6 percent of the U.S. total. Blue-collar employment during the 1970s increased at twice the national rate. This rapid expansion was attributable primarily to manufacturing employment, which increased at almost four times the national rate (18 percent versus 5 percent). White-collar employment growth was only about one-third above the national average.

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[1]This section of the paper draws material from a forthcoming Urban Institute book, The Fourth Wave: California's Newest Immigrants, describing the economic and fiscal impacts of Mexican immigration to southern California.

In Los Angeles County, two-thirds of the employment growth was in white-collar jobs, which includes professional occupations as well as administrative, technical, clerical, and sales jobs. Overall growth in the blue-collar sector was small; machine operator employment actually declined slightly.

According to our tabulations of 1980 census data, in that year 444,000 immigrants who came to the United States during the 1970s were employed in Los Angeles County. Of this total, 210,000 were Mexicans, 74,000 were non-Mexican Hispanics, and 160,000 were non-Hispanics. These new immigrant workers accounted for about 70 percent of the net employment growth in Los Angeles between 1970 and 1980.

Despite these large numbers, Mexican workers had practically no impact on white-collar employment, particularly on the higher-paying professional, managerial, and technical occupations in Los Angeles. About two-thirds of the 645,000 net new jobs added during the 1970s were in the white-collar category, but only 25,000 Mexicans had the educational background, skill, or language ability required to work in these occupations. In contrast to the Mexicans, other Hispanics, Asians, and Europeans held one-quarter of all the white-collar jobs that were added in Los Angeles County during the decade.[2]

Half of the new skilled blue-collar employees and almost as many new service employees in Los Angeles County were Mexicans. Although unskilled

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[2]Ideally, we would like to know what fraction of jobs held by persons entering the labor force between 1970 and 1980 were taken by recent immigrants. Unfortunately, the decennial censuses provide information only on net new employment, which is the difference in the numbers of persons working in 1970 and in 1980. Since the net figure includes jobs lost as well as jobs added, dividing the number of recent immigrant workers by the total of net employment growth tends to exaggerate immigrants' importance in the composition of new job holders.

blue-collar employment expanded by only 71,000, Mexicans held 116,000 such jobs and other immigrants another 52,000. Clearly, the number of persons other than recent immigrants holding these jobs declined during the 1970s.

Role of Mexican Immigrants in Manufacturing. California is the production center of the West and Los Angeles is the production center of California. Out of every 100 manufacturing jobs in California, 45 are found in Los Angeles. And Los Angeles County alone employs more workers in manufacturing than all the other large western states--Washington, Oregon, Colorado, Arizona, and Idaho—combined. Moreover, one out of every ten workers in Los Angeles County in 1980 was a Mexican immigrant. About half of all recent Mexican immigrants are employed in manufacturing, and another one-fifth are employed in service industries.

The Mexican presence in Los Angeles manufacturing is shown in detail in table 9 along with a comparison between Mexican and non-Mexican immigrant workers. In all sectors except highly technical transportation equipment (mainly aircraft) and machinery (mainly defense contracts), Mexican immigrants are more numerous than all non-Mexican immigrants combined; in several industries (lumber and wood, furniture and fixtures) Mexicans are more than twice as numerous as other immigrants.

The effect of the employment of recent immigrants on other groups in the Los Angeles work force is shown in table 10. Net manufacturing employment increased by 113,000 during the 1970s, but since immigrants arriving since 1970 held 168,000 manufacturing jobs in 1980, there must have been a net decline of 55,000 jobs among other workers. This does not necessarily imply, however, that workers were displaced by immigrants. Given the high turnover rate in the manufacturing sector, this change may reflect the voluntary

Table 9

Immigrant Share of Manufacturing Employment
in Los Angeles County, 1980

Manufacturing Sector	Total Employment (in thousands)	Immigrants' Share of Employment			Immigrants' Share of Production Workers[a]
		Mexicans	Others	Total	
Food	42.8	28.0%	16.4%	44.4%	54.8%
Textiles	11.1	38.2	19.1	57.3	73.7
Apparel	76.1	44.1	30.5	74.6	89.4
Lumber and Wood	10.4	36.1	12.8	48.8	59.2
Furniture and Fixtures	33.5	45.4	14.0	59.4	73.6
Metals	90.4	22.3	11.5	33.8	38.2
Machinery	181.3	12.4	15.2	27.6	31.3
Transportation Equipment	184.5	7.4	9.3	16.6	21.4
Other Sectors	254.0	18.7	13.5	32.1	34.4
All Manufacturing	884.1	19.5	14.4	33.9	39.9

Source: Tabulations by The Urban Institute of the 1980 Census Public Use Microdata Sample.

a. Based on production worker/nonproduction worker distribution in Los Angeles County industries as reported in the 1977 Census of Manufacturers.

Table 10

Recent Immigrant Share of Net Employment Growth
in Selected Industries in Los Angeles County, 1970 to 1980
(in thousands)

Industrial Sector	Total Employment Growth 1970 to 1980 (1)	Employment of Immigrants Arriving Between 1970 and 1980		Net Replacement (1) - ([2]+[3]) (4)
		Mexicans (2)	All Others (3)	
Manufacturing	113.2	105.8	62.5	-55.1
Eating and Drinking	52.1	15.3	13.7	23.1
Other Retail	32.1	15.7	27.1	-10.7
Personal Services	-7.4	10.3	14.1	-31.8
Business Services	64.4	9.9	13.2	41.3
Other Services	213.0	15.9	45.8	151.3
All Other	177.8	37.0	57.3	83.5
Total	645.2	209.9	233.7	201.6

Source: Tabulations by The Urban Institute of the 1980 Census Public Use Microdata Sample; and U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census of Population, vol. 1, Characteristics of the Population, Chapter C: "General Social and Economic Characteristics," Part 6, California, PC80-1-C6, July 1983; and Chapter D: "Detailed Population Characteristics," Part 6, California, PC80-1-D6, November 1983.

departure of native workers from low-wage, low-skill jobs in the manufacturing sector for other employment or a move of such workers out of Los Angeles County.

The number of jobs held by recent Mexican immigrants in all the nonmanufacturing sectors was roughly equal to the total number of manufacturing jobs occupied. Within this group, one of the most dramatic changes occurred in personal services; all immigrants combined took 24,400 such jobs, of which Mexicans claimed 10,300, at a time when the sector actually lost 7,400 jobs.

Mexican Immigrants and the Competition for Jobs

In June of 1983, not long after unemployment in southern California had reached 10 percent and unemployment among blue-collar workers exceeded 15 percent, The Urban Institute commissioned a poll of southern California residents to obtain their perceptions of immigration and its effects. Nearly half our respondents believed that illegal immigrants take jobs away from other southern California residents and contribute to unemployment. Among blacks in the survey, the proportion was over half--59 percent believed that jobs were threatened. What is the evidence? Do immigrants take jobs away from Americans?

We have chosen to focus our attention here on the impact of Mexican immigration on black unemployment, not only because blacks constitute a sizable population in Los Angeles but also because blacks have had below-average income and above-average unemployment and poverty rates in southern California and may therefore be vulnerable to the presence of Mexican immigrants.

A good starting point is to analyze trends in labor force participation rates during the period 1970 to 1982. A decline in the labor force participation rate of native workers, other things equal, may suggest the presence of discouraged workers—potential workers who become so discouraged at not being able to find work that they no longer look for a job--and therefore a possible loss of jobs for native workers.

Blacks generally, and black teenagers especially, do not appear to have been harmed by immigration in the period from 1970 to 1982. During the 1970s and into the 1980s, adult labor force participation rates increased in the Los Angeles metropolitan area and in California, reflecting a national pattern of rising labor force participation. Throughout the period, participation rates in Los Angeles continued to exceed the national average and maintained a fairly constant lead. Teenage labor force participation rates also increased over the period, and the rates for black teenagers in Los Angeles and the state showed gains relative to the rate for black teenagers in the nation. By contrast, participation rates for all teenagers in Los Angeles declined relative to the national average, dropping below the national labor force participation rate for teenagers by 1982.

Short of dropping out of the labor force, native workers who find their jobs jeopardized by immigrants may experience higher rates of unemployment. Data on unemployment rates are given in table 11. From 1970 to 1982 unemployment rates for all groups in the United States more than doubled. As shown in table 11, the smallest increases are for blacks in Los Angeles--27 percent for adults and 35 percent for teenagers—followed by black teenagers in California. Therefore, trends in unemployment rates also fail to provide evidence of sharp job competition between immigrants and blacks.

Table 11

Unemployment Rates in the Los Angeles SCSA, California, and the United States, 1970, 1980, and 1982 (in percentages)

	All Persons			Blacks		
	1970	1980	1982	1970	1980	1982[c]
Adults[a]						
Los Angeles SCSA[b]	5.5	5.2	8.5[d]	8.9[e]	9.3	11.3[d]
California	5.7	5.9	8.9	9.2	10.0	14.6
United States	3.8	5.9	8.6	6.0	10.6	16.6
Teenagers[a]						
Los Angeles SCSA[b]	13.6	13.4	23.9[d]	26.2[e]	25.9	35.4[d]
California	15.1	14.4	23.4	27.9	26.3	39.7
United States	11.2	14.4	23.2	19.4	27.7	48.1

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1970 and 1980 Censuses, Characteristics of the Population, California and U.S. Summary; Bureau of Labor Statistics, Geographic Profile of Employment and Unemployment, 1982.

a. "Adults" refers to persons 20 years of age and older. "Teenagers" refers to persons 16 to 19 years of age.

b. The Los Angeles Standard Consolidated Statistical Area consists of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura Counties.

c. Based on all nonwhite persons.

d. Excludes Ventura County.

e. Excludes Orange and Ventura Counties.

Statistical Analysis. The evidence just presented does not deal completely satisfactorily with the effect of Hispanic immigration on black unemployment. To do so requires separating other possible factors influencing unemployment from those of immigration. This we have done in two related analyses for 1980, one based on 247 metropolitan areas across the United States and another restricted to 51 metropolitan areas in California, Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona--states with large Mexican populations.

In each case several potential determinants of black unemployment rates were studied simultaneously, including the percentage of Hispanics in the local population, the rate of local-area population growth between 1970 and 1980, the percentage of income derived from construction and durable goods manufacturing, unemployment rates for whites, and black educational attainment. Neither analysis provided support for the contention that Mexican immigrants take jobs away from blacks. Black unemployment rates are not increased--and if anything are lowered--by a rise in the proportion of Mexican immigrants in a local labor market. Most of the variation in black unemployment rates among metropolitan areas can be attributed to differences in black educational attainment, in the rate of population growth, in the degree of durable goods manufacturing and construction, and in general labor market conditions.

The absence of noticeable negative immigration-related employment effects on blacks is reflected in black patterns of internal migration to California in the 1970s and early 1980s. Whereas the rate of black internal migration to California during the early 1970s was about the same as to other states in the Pacific region, the rate of migration to California for other groups was considerably lower. Net internal migration of blacks to California between

1975 and 1980 totaled 57,000, compared with a net out-migration of 119,000 Hispanics and non-Hispanic whites during this time period. Between 1980 and 1983, there was net in-migration of 14,000 blacks to California from other states, while 73,000 more whites left California than entered.

The evidence suggests that during the 1970s the influx of Mexicans to Los Angeles and southern California did not increase the aggregate level of unemployment for blacks. Although unemployment for all groups rose during the decade as a result of national economic stagnation, for blacks in Los Angeles--teenagers and adults alike--the increase was less than elsewhere.

Do Immigrants Depress Wage Rates?

Another concern that emerged in our 1983 poll of southern California residents was that undocumented workers brought down the overall level of wages in selected occupations. Over two-thirds of all respondents and more than four-fifths of black respondents expressed this belief. Overwhelmingly, respondents identified unskilled jobs as those most affected.

In discussing the wage effects of immigration, the impact of immigrants on average wage levels of particular occupations and industries must be distinguished from their impact on the wages of individuals within those occupations and industries. To the extent that immigrants are paid a wage rate lower than the average wage rate, they could bring down average wages in a given employment sector simply by becoming more numerous without necessarily having an adverse spillover effect on the wages of nonimmigrants in that sector.

We referred earlier to the spectacular growth of manufacturing employment in southern California in the 1970s. How was this region able to counter the national decline in employment in many of these low-wage labor-intensive

sectors? Evidence suggests that the answer lies in the growing wage gap between skilled and unskilled labor in manufacturing.

Perhaps the most striking example of the widening wage gap is between production and nonproduction workers in the apparel industry--one of the industries with a high concentration of Mexican workers. Between 1969 and 1977, production apparel workers' wages in the United States as a whole went up by nearly 80 percent compared with less than 65 percent in Los Angeles. The wages of nonproduction apparel workers in the United States also went up by about 80 percent. In Los Angeles, however, the wages of nonproduction apparel workers rose by 100 percent. Thus, the wages of production workers in the Los Angeles apparel industry lagged behind the wages not only of their counterparts nationwide but also of nonproduction workers in Los Angeles.

There can be little doubt that the relative wage decline characterizing unskilled manufacturing jobs in Los Angeles is related to the presence of immigrant labor in large numbers, particularly Mexicans and Central Americans. Since immigrant workers tend to be paid less than native workers in the same industry, a growing preponderance of immigrant workers lowers the average wage rate received by all workers in the industry.

Detailed information relating relative wage growth in selected industries in Los Angeles to the proportion of Mexican immigrant workers in those industries is contained in table 12. The most notable feature of this table is the behavior of average wages in low-wage manufacturing which increased in Los Angeles between 1972 and 1980 only three-fourths (76.7 percent) as fast as average wages nationwide. This is the lowest relative growth rate in the entire table. In these industries, Mexican immigrants comprised nearly half of all production workers. By contrast, in five higher-wage industries where

Table 12

Wage Growth in Los Angeles Relative to U.S. Wage Growth, 1972 to 1980

Industry	Los Angeles Wages, 1980	Increase in L.A. Wages, 1972-1980, as a Percentage of U.S. Wage Increase	Mexican Immigrants as a Percentage of All Workers, 1980
All Workers	$15,054	108.8%	9.9%
Low-wage Manufacturing[a]	5.06[b]	76.7	47.1
High-wage Manufacturing[c]	7.97[b]	90.7	19.5
All Retail	9,469	108.3	9.5
Eating and drinking establishments (restaurants, bars)	5,591	89.1	16.8
All other retail	11,196	108.4	6.6
All Services	14,099	115.8	5.5
Hotels	7,312[d]	95.1	15.0
Personal services	8,069	92.2	15.2
All other services	14,659	117.2	3.9
Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate	15,590	104.4	2.6

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1970 and 1980 Censuses, Characteristics of the Population; 1980 Census, Public Use Microdata Samples; County Business Patterns (1972 and 1980); Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment and Earnings, States and Areas and Supplement to Employment and Earnings, States and Areas, Data for 1977 to 1980.

a. Includes leather goods, apparel, textile mills, lumber and wood, and furniture and fixtures industries.

b. Hourly wages include only production workers.

c. Includes metals; machinery; stone, clay, and glass; food; and transportation equipment industries.

d. Estimated.

Mexican immigrants comprised only about 20 percent of all production workers, wages rose 90.7 percent of the national average.

We conclude that there is some evidence of wage depression attributable to immigrants. The presence of a growing immigrant work force is responsible for the slower rate of average wage increases observed in these low-wage, labor-intensive manufacturing industries, and the resulting lower wage levels account for the growth of employment in these industries that was noted earlier.

Is There Worker-Specific Wage Depression? What our analysis has so far failed to address is whether the wages of individual workers were depressed by the influx of immigrants. Many of the policy disputes focus on whether there is any evidence for the existence of worker-specific wage depression. We now take up a brief consideration of this important issue.

Earlier we reported the results of an analysis, based on 247 cities nationwide and on 51 metropolitan areas in four southwestern states, designed to assess the impact of varying shares of Hispanics in local labor markets on black unemployment rates. The same samples have been used here to examine whether blacks exhibit worker-specific wage depression as the proportion of Hispanics in metropolitan populations increases. In these analyses, the key variable is average black family income in the metropolitan area. All other variables are the same as in the earlier analysis except that average white family income has been substituted for white unemployment rates.

In the United States sample, increasing the proportion of Hispanics in an area decreases average black family income, suggesting that worker-specific wage depression exists. However, this effect is not very important quantitatively. Raising the share of Hispanics in an area from an average of

5 percent to 7.5 percent, for example, produces a fall in average black family income from $15,818 to $15,733, or by just $85. In the southwest sample, increasing the proportion of Mexican immigrants in a local labor market actually raises average black family income, but the effect is not statistically significant. Taken together, these results point to the general conclusion that the presence of Hispanic immigrants in local labor markets has little effect, positively or negatively, on black family income.

SUMMARY

Census counts suggest that at least 1.8 million foreign-born persons entered California during the 1970s, which does not include a possible additional several hundred thousand immigrants not counted in the census. In the early 1980s immigration to California has continued at a pace at least equal to that of the previous ten years. The largest number of recent immigrants is found in Los Angeles County, where more than 900,000 immigrants settled during the 1970s.

The economic, demographic, and social characteristics of new immigrants differ sharply by national origin. Typically, entrants from Asian countries have more education than the native population, whereas most Hispanic entrants have less. Differences in educational level among various ethnic groups are reflected in their occupational status and income, with most Asians and Europeans holding white-collar jobs.

Although immigration to California has accelerated since the 1960s, migration to the state from elsewhere in this country has slowed appreciably. Between 1975 and 1983, the outflow of persons from California to other states almost equaled the inflow from other regions of the country. More Hispanic

and non-Hispanic whites left California than entered from other states. At the same time, there was a substantial net inflow of blacks and Asians.

Recent immigrants absorbed more than two-thirds of the 645,000 jobs added to the Los Angeles County economy during the 1970s. In the remainder of southern California, which gained most of the new jobs in the region, recent immigrants took only one out of every eight new jobs added in the decade. Mexicans typically gravitate toward low-skill, low-wage blue-collar and service jobs. Many of these are in the manufacturing sector, which employs almost one-half of the recent Mexican immigrants; most hold jobs as machine operators. The Mexican presence is particularly large in food, apparel, textiles, and furniture industries. The number of immigrants who arrived in Los Angeles from 1970 and held manufacturing jobs in 1980 exceeded total net manufacturing employment growth; thus the employment of native workers and of immigrants who arrived before 1970 declined.

We found no evidence for the existence of job competition between Mexican immigrants and native black workers in southern California. Between 1970 and 1980, net black employment in Los Angeles increased by 107,000 persons, with 98,000 of this total in white-collar occupations. On the other hand, Mexican immigrants in Los Angeles who arrived during the 1970s held 210,000 jobs in 1980, but fewer than 25,000 of these were in white-collar employment. Even though the total number of jobs in the low-skill occupational categories of machine operator and laborer declined during the decade, the number of Mexican immigrants holding jobs in these occupations grew by 108,000.

Mexicans, and in all likelihood other immigrant groups, reduced average wages in manufacturing and some services, both in Los Angeles and elsewhere in California. This reduction in average wages primarily reflects the increasing

number of Hispanic immigrants in the work force, because wages for this group are lower than for non-Hispanics in similar occupations. We also conclude that immigrants may have depressed slightly the wages of non-Hispanics working as laborers, but their impact on the wages paid to non-Hispanics in semi-skilled and skilled occupations appears to be negligible.

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